

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY DAKAR
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AMEMBASSY RABAT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0248

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, SOPN, SS, MR
SUBJECT: AP REP INTERVIEWS PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH

REF: 77 NOUAKCHOTT 2719(NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH IN INTERVIEW
WITH AP CORRESPONDENT STATED THAT: THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND
INDEPENDENCE OF MAURITANIA, ALTHOUGH DIRECTLY CHALLENGED BY
ALGERIAN AGGRESSION, WERE NON-NEGOTIABLE; FRENCH MILITARY ASSIST-
ANCE TO MAURITANIA WAS ESSENTIAL AND WOULD PROBABLY BE NEEDED
FOR INDEFINITE FUTURE; MAURITANIA WILL TAKE NECESSARY AUSTERIL MEASU-
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RES TO ALLEVIATE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY WAR,
BUT WOULD NOT DEVALUATE OR CHANGE CURRENCY. END SUMMARY

2. MAURITANIAN (GIRM) PRESIDENT MOKTAR OULD DADDAH, DURING
INTERVIEW WITH PARIS-BASED ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP) CORRESPONDENT
ED CODIE, REPEATED STANDARD MAURITANIAN THEME THAT ALTHOUGH
THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF MAURITANIA WERE BEING

CHALLENGED BY ALGERIAN AGGRESSION, MAURITANIA WOULD RESIST THIS AGGRESSION AND NOT COMPROMISE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HIS FORMER CLOSE FRIEND ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE, WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE SIGNING OF THE THEN SECRET 1972 MOROCCO/MAURITANIA ACCORD IN WHICH BOTH COUNTRIES AGREED TO DIVIDE THE FORMER SPANISH SAHARA AND WHO RESTATED HIS CONCURRENCE AT 1974 RABAT ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT, HAD BETRAYED MAURITANIA. PRESIDENT PRAISED FRENCH FOR THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THREAT TO HIS COUNTRY AND THEIR PROVISION OF CRITICALLY NEEDED SUPPORT. HE STATED FRENCH JAGUARS WERE ESSENTIAL FOR DEFENSE OF MAURITANIA AND HE EXPECTED FRENCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD BE NEEDED FOR A LONGTIME -- FOR MONTHS OR YEARS. HE STATED MAURITANIANS ARE READY TO SIGN CONTRACT TO BUY "APPROXIMATELY SIX" PUCARA AIRCRAFT, BUT SUGGESTED THESE COULD NOT REPLACE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY JAGUARS. OULD DADDAH NOTED WHILE MAURITANIA HAD PREVIOUSLY DEMONSTRATED ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM ITS FORMER COLONIAL POWER, IT WAS NOW REQUESTING VITAL ASSISTANCE FROM A FRIEND WITH CLOSE HISTORICAL AND OTHER TIES TO MAURITANIA. IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, PRESIDENT SAID MAURITANIA WAS "ABSOLUTELY NOT" EITHER DEVALUING OUGIYA OR TAKING STEPS TO REENTER CFA ZONE.

3. CODIE MADE TWO-DAY VISIT TO MAURITANIA AS PART OF SHORT SWING THROUGH WEST AFRICA ENROUTE BACK TO PARIS AFTER COVERING FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S VISIT TO IVORY COAST. HE TOLD EMBOFF THAT PRESIDENT ULD DADDAH EXUDED THE CONFIDENCE OF A LEADER FULLY IN CONTROL OF HIS COUNTRY, CANDIDLY RESPONDING
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TO ALL QUESTIONS DURING RELAXED ON AND ONE-HALF HOUR INTERVIEW EVENING OF JANUARY 24. LOIC EVEN, PARIS-BASED REUTERS CORRESPONDENT, ACCOMPANIED CODIE IN CALL ON PRESIDENT. ON JANUARY 25 CODIE FILED 600 WORD STORY ON INTERVIEW AND STATED HE INTENDS TO WRITE LONGER IN-DEPTH ARTICLE IN NEXT FEW DAYS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE AMEMBASSY PARIS AND/OR AF/W FORWARDING TO US SOONEST COPY OF HIS STORIES.

4. CODIE MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH MAURITANIAN MINISTER OF INFORMATION (WHO BASICALLY REPEATED STANDARD THEMES OF PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH AND MAURITANIAN PRESS). ALTHOUGH BEFORE ARRIVAL NOUAKCHOTT CODIE WAS UNAWARE OF PREVIOUS MAURITANIAN INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING AP OFFICE IN NOUAKCHOTT (REFTEL), HE DID DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH MINISTER OF INFORMATION WHO ENCOURAGED HIM TO ESTABLISH THIS OFFICE. HE RECEIVED DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT MAURITANIANS STRONGLY DESIRE TO EXPAND NEWS COVERAGE OF MAURITANIA IN AMERICAN PRESS. HE INITIATED SEARCH FOR NOUAKCHOTT STRINGER.

5. COMMENT: PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS DURING INTERVIEW WERE STRAIGHT FORWARD AND CONSISTENT WITH BOTH HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRONOUNCEMENTS MADE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS. CODIE WAS IMPRESSED

BY EVIDENT CONFIDENCE AND SINCERITY OF PRESIDENT AND SURPRISED
BY FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT THAT FRENCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD
PROBABLY BE NEEDED FOR INDEFINITE FUTURE. DURING JANUARY 25
SPEECH TO GIRM NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS (BEING REPORTED SEPTEL),
PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH EMPHASIZED THAT BOUMEDINE HAD BLESSED (BENI)
JUNE 1972 MOROCCAN/MAURITANIAN ACCORD AND REAFFIRMED THIS SUPPORT
AT 1974 RABAT SUMMIT. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT IS USUALLY AVAILABLE TO
IMPORTANT FOREIGN JOURNALISTS FOR INTERVIEWS, THE JUGGLING OF PRE-
SIDENTIAL SCHEDULE ON VERY SHORT NOTICE TO RECEIVE US CORRESPON-
DENT IS INDICATIVE OF INCREASING INTEREST OF PRESIDENT IN
ASSURING THAT MAURITANIA'S STORY IS ACCURATELY REPORTED TO
AMERICAN PUBLIC. A MEASURE OF HIS SELF CONFIDENCE AND RELAXED
ATTITUDE MAY BE ADDUCED FROM THE FACT THAT ON JANUARY 24,
THE DAY BEFORE THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE CONGRESS OF THE
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NATIONAL PARTY THE PRESIDENT NOT ONLY GAVE CODIE AN HOUR AND A
HALF OF HIS TIME BUT HE ALSO (A) RECEIVED THE CREDENTIALS OF TWO
NEW AMBASSADORS (EAST GERMANY AND SYRIA), (B) RECEIVED ME ON
THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF USAID DISASTER RELIEF INSPECTOR
MARTINDELL AND (C) HOSTED A DINNER IN MAOTINDELL'S HOPA. WE
HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE PRESIDENT EXPECTS TO DEPART ON
OFFICIAL TRIP TO BRUSSELS IN NEXT FEW DAYS ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE
PENDING GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED
BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE. HE QUITE DEFINITELY MANIFEST NO SIGNS
OF THE INSECURITY ASCRIBED TO HIM IN PLE DEBELIUS ARTICLE
PUBLISHED IN THE JANUARY 21/22 INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE.

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